Ministry of Environment and Forests in 2003 which would practically stop any new mineral exploration and production in the scheduled areas;

(b) whether Government are aware that substantial portion of the country's minerals reserves are in the Scheduled Areas; and

(c) if so, the measures taken or contemplated to remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) The Ministry of Environment and Forests has informed that guidelines dated 20.10.2003 issued by them do not prohibit any project including mineral exploration and production in the Scheduled Areas.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) In view of (a) above, does not arise.

Illegal mining

†2111. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that illegal mining at hills and rivers has been going on in the various States despite a ban imposed thereon; and

(b) if so, the details of the steps Government have taken to check such illegal mining in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) Instances of illegal mining in different States have come to the notice of the Government from time to time and have been forwarded to the concerned States for suitable action.

(b) To effectively curb illegal mining, State Governments have been empowered to make rules for preventing illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals under the provisions of Section 23C of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.

Minerals in continental shelf/territorial waters

2112. SHRI THANGA TAMIL SELVAN: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether it is a fact that lot of mineral resources are available in the continental shelf/territorial water;

(b) whether any survey has been conducted to assess the potential; and

(c) the steps being taken to exploit these mineral resources?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. It is a fact that a lot of non-living mineral resources are available in our continental shelf/territorial waters. In addition to poly-metallic manganese nodules, occurrences of oil and placer sands are also reported from the off-sore region. Geological Survey of India(GSI), a subordinate Department under Ministry of Mines and National Institute of Oceanography(NIO), Goa have carried out surveys within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). They have assessed the potential for heavy mineral sands, oolites and calcareous sands, high grade of lime mud deposits, phosphatised sediments, etc.

(c) Oil and gas are being produced from off-shore regions since long. No commercial exploitation is known for poly-metallic nodules and placer sand at present. To provide for development and regulation of mineral resources in the territorial waters, continental shelf, EEZ and other maritime zones of India and to provide for matter connected therewith or incidental thereto, Central Government has enacted the legislation namely 'The Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002'. This Act is yet to come into force.

Minerals exploration by Geological Survey of India

†2113. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) the areas in Chhattisgarh where mineral exploration has been carried out by Geological Survey of India during the last three years stating names of the minerals explored in each area;

(b) the number of units of the Geological Survey of India engaged in exploration of minerals in the State;

(c) whether the number of employees working in the State is sufficient where minerals are in abundance, in comparison with other States; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.